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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 10/23/09

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ARTICLES:

- (1) Government to prepare plan to relocate Futenma facility to new alternative site in Okinawa, present it to U.S. by year's end

SANKEI (Top Play) (Slightly abridged)
October 23, 2009

The government has decided to give up the Democratic Party of Japan's campaign pledge to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture, outside the prefecture. It intends to draw up a plan to relocate the facility to a new alternative site within the prefecture and present the plan to the U.S. by the end of this year, according to government sources yesterday. In Okinawa, a number of people have begun to judge that relocation of the alternative facility within the prefecture is inevitable. The policy switch also reflects consideration for the U.S., which is urging the Japanese government to quickly make a final decision. Even so, it is uncertain whether the Japanese and U.S. governments would be able reach agreement on the new plan with the local communities concerned.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, and other cabinet ministers concerned unofficially agreed in early October on the idea of presenting a new relocation site to Washington by the end of this year. They later reported the idea to Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. Final coordination is now underway for the government to present to U.S. President Barack Obama when he visits Japan in November its new policy of proposing a different relocation plan by the end of the year.

In a series of meetings with U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates during his visit to Japan on Oct. 20-21, the Japanese side unofficially proposed a plan to integrate the functions of Futenma into Kadena Air Base, but the U.S. side rejected this.

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In their agreement in 2006, Japan and the U.S. decided to relocate the Futenma air station to the coastal area of U.S. Camp Schwab in Nago City. But the DPJ, in its call for lightening the burden on Okinawa Prefecture, specified in its report titled "Okinawa Vision 2008" released in July of last year: "The party will explore ways to move the facility out of the prefecture and even aim at relocating it out of the nation, based on changes in the strategic environment." Prime Minister Hatoyama also pledged in the campaign for the last House of Representatives election that he would relocate the air station outside the prefecture if he took power.

The U.S. government has opposed the Hatoyama administration's proposal for transferring the air station outside the prefecture. The government therefore has begun to judge that this proposal might impact the planned transfer of 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the return of six facilities south of Kadena Air Base to Japan -- plans included in the Japan-U.S. agreement on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. In addition, Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima has also said: "The Okinawa government had to accept the transfer within the prefecture." Bearing such circumstances in mind, the government decided to present a fresh plan to relocate the facility to an alternative site in the prefecture.

Gates stated in a meeting with Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada on the 20th: "This (the existing plan) is the only feasible plan." When he met with the defense minister on the 21st, Gates also ruled out the Kadena-Futenma integration plan, which the government was looking into as an alternative to the current plan.

Even if the government adopts a new relocation plan, however, the possibility of its acceptance by the U.S. government or the Okinawa prefectural government is slim. Given this, it is highly likely that Japan and the U.S. will discuss the Camp Schwab plan again. The three ruling parties' agreement stipulates that the government will move in the direction of reviewing the current U.S. force realignment plan." The Social Democratic Party has insisted on the need to relocate the functions of Futenma out of the nation. Under such circumstances, coordination is unlikely to be easy.

(2) Government seems eager to make new proposal on Futenma to send signal that he will make a swift decision

With respect to the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture), the government has shown a stance of presenting a new plan before the year's end and re-discussing the matter with the United States. This shows the government's consideration of the United States, which wants to settle the matter before President Barack Obama visits Japan in November. Nevertheless, chances are slim for the two governments to reach an agreement in a short period of time. The government's attempt can be said to be the last resort with the acceptance of the existing plan in mind.

"We have other options, so the Futenma relocation issue can be settled early," Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama told the press corps in the Diet building yesterday, implying that the government will look into new location plans.

There were moves to examine new candidate sites replacing the

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coastal area of Camp Schwab, the relocation site for Futenma Air Station.

Earlier this month, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa sent Local Cooperation Bureau Director-General Motomi Inoue to Okinawa to tour such places as the U.S. military's Kadena Ammunition Depot area and Ie Jima Auxiliary Airfield. It was reportedly part of verification work in accordance with the Japan-U.S. agreement. However, Kitazawa commented that he wanted to expand options before Gates's Japan trip, implying that the government had looked into new relocation plans.

Nevertheless, all places cited as potential candidate sites had been examined and rejected by the previous coalition administration of the Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito. "They are like ghosts," a Japanese government source said. There is even speculation that the government will come up with a new plan that can be used as a pretext for accepting the existing one.

During his stay in Japan, Gates reportedly declined such events as a salute from Defense Ministry officials/Self-Defense Force troops and a welcome dinner party in a bid to demonstrate a tough stance toward Tokyo. The Hatoyama administration got the message.

Prime Minister Hatoyama has said he plans to decide the final policy after seeing the results of the Nago mayoral election next January. But because a simple postponement might result in greater pressure from the United States, the Prime Minister wants to determine a new relocation plan to send the United States a signal indicating that he will make a decision swiftly.

(3) In meeting with Okada, U.S. defense secretary strongly calls for Japan to reach early conclusion on Futenma relocation issue

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 23, 2009

It has been learned that with regard to the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in the city of Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture), an issue pending between Japan and the United States, during talks on Oct. 20 with Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates made remarks to the effect that "I don't want you to put President Barack Obama to trouble when he visits in November." It is believed that his remarks indicated the U.S.'s tough stance of moving toward an early conclusion on the Futenma issue with an eye on the planned Japan-U.S. summit.

When asked by reporters on Oct. 22 whether Gates had called on him to reach a conclusion before Obama's Japan visit, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said, "I heard that second hand. But we did not discuss it." As to the timing for a conclusion, Hatoyama reiterated, "Basically, it doesn't matter if a conclusion is reached after (the Nago mayoral election next January)."

According to informed sources, during his talks with Okada, Gates also asked him to inform Washington of the result of the Japanese

side's verification of how and why the previous government had adopted the current Futenma relocation plan.

Appearing on a Tokyo Broadcasting System Television program on Oct. 22, Okada said, "The Futenma issue is one of the issues that should be resolved before the end of the year or within 100 days."

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(4) Futenma Air Station relocation and measures to support Afghanistan are separate issues, U.S. secretary of defense tells defense minister

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
October 23, 2009

It has been learned that when he met with Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa on Oct. 21, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told him that the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture, and Japan's new support measures for Afghanistan are two different issues. Gates thus disappointed the Hatoyama administration straight off, as it had hoped that it would be able to win concessions from the U.S. over the relocation issue by proposing additional contribution measures for Afghanistan.

According to a senior Defense Ministry official, Gates pressed Kitazawa to move ahead with the relocation according to the present plan without regard for new support measures for Afghanistan, categorically noting that the Futenma relocation issue and aid measures for Afghanistan are two different issues. He called on Japan to settle the issue at an early time, underscoring the fact that the U.S., after studying various relocation candidate sites, had reached a decision that any plan other than the present one would not be implementable.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama on the 22nd met with Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and Kitazawa at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (the Kantei) and discussed a future policy on the Futenma issue. In the evening on the same day, he told reporters, "For President Obama, the issue of supporting Afghanistan and Pakistan is in a way a far greater issue (than the Futenma issue)." He thus hinted that there is no change in his perception that it would be possible to obtain understanding from the U.S. on the Futenma relocation issue by contributing assistance to Afghanistan.

The prime minister also stressed that it would be all right if the government reaches a decision on the matter after the Nago mayoral election in January next year, noting, "I would like the U.S. to understand that settling the relocation issue requires a fair amount of time."

(5) Editorial: The Hatoyama administration should debate issues in Diet

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 23, 2009

The 173rd extraordinary Diet session, the first venue for debates between the ruling and opposition camps since the change in government, is to be convened on Oct. 26. We feel that it is late to convene a Diet session, because more than a month has elapsed since the launch of Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration led by Yukio Hatoyama. The prime minister should clarify the priority order of immediate policy issues through a policy speech or Diet debate. He should come up with definite policies both on the diplomatic and security fronts. The Diet will stay in session 36 days until Nov. 30. It is questionable whether the ruling and opposition camps can undertake sufficient debate in such a short session. The number of bills to be submitted has also been narrowed down. It is regrettable

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that some of bills and issues that appear to require attention have been put on hold.

The session ends as early as the end of November. This is presumably intended to allow the government to devote the rest of the year to the compilation of the fiscal 2010 budget. However, Diet deliberations have nothing to do with the compilation of the budget before year's end. It is out of the question if the government set a short-term Diet session with the intention of thwarting investigation of the issue of the fabrication of political fund donations from individuals connected with the prime minister. We would like the prime minister to fulfill his accountability in a dignified manner on the political funds donation issue as well.

It is also unacceptable that legislation stipulating the competence of the National Strategy Bureau (NSB) will not be submitted. The NSB had been expected to map out basic guidelines for macro-economic policies and budget compilation in place of the defunct Council of Economic and Fiscal Policy and serve as one axle of support, the other being the Government Revitalization Unit (GRU).

The presence of Deputy prime Minister and State Minister for National Strategy Naoto Kan, who was supposed to serve as the central command, is eclipsed due to the postponement of the legislation. The role of the NSB is to clarify the priority order of budget distributions with an eye on the mid- to long-term viewpoint and the economic and employment trends. We cannot dispel concern that if the situation is left as is, the government's aim of compiling the budget under political leadership will fail to live up to expectations. We cannot rid ourselves of uneasiness about the economic and employment situations either.

The legislation that would enable the continuation of the Maritime Self-Defense Agency's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean will not be submitted either. The refueling mission will likely be terminated in January next year. And yet neither the prime minister nor the foreign minister has given any clear-cut account on why the government will suspend the refueling operation, which is earning the international community's high praise. The government has yet to come up with concrete proposals for contributing to the war on terror in place of terminating the refueling mission.

It has been viewed that the submission of a ship-inspection bill targeting North Korea would be put on the back burner. However, consideration is now under way for its submission to the upcoming extraordinary Diet session. But the prospect is that an article noting the involvement of the Maritime Self-Defense Force in ship inspection will be deleted. It is necessary to hold in-depth debate on whether this will enable effective operations.

We would like the Liberal Democratic Party, which has gone into the opposition camp, to squarely debate the Hatoyama administration on these issues. It is the role of the Diet to clarify political challenges and points at issue through debate between the ruling and opposition parties.

(6) Editorial: Japan-U.S. defense talks -- A warning to take the bilateral alliance seriously

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 22, 2009

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In his talks with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, among others, visiting U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates urged Japan to swiftly implement the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture) to the coastal area of Camp Schwab (in Nago) based on the bilateral agreement.

To Japan, which has yet to come up with a clear-cut answer, Secretary Gates stressed, "Without the relocation of Futenma Air Station, there will be no relocation of U.S. Marines to Guam." This must be taken as a warning from Gates -- who is disappointed with the Hatoyama administration's stance of postponing the issue of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan -- that unless the Hatoyama administration actively address the matter, the Japan-U.S. alliance

might fall apart.

The lack of concrete progress from this visit means a similar situation could arise during President Barack Obama's visit in November. We fear such a development. The matter goes beyond the realization of the manifesto (campaign pledges), which falls in the realm of domestic politics. The Prime Minister and relevant cabinet ministers must speed up their coordination efforts with a shared sense of crisis.

Through their talks, Prime Minister Hatoyama and Secretary Gates affirmed, among other matters, a policy direction to further strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister simply said, "I want to come up with an answer from the viewpoint of obtaining the understanding of the people, including those in Okinawa." His words were designed to demonstrate the stance of attaching importance to the process that led to the change of administration following his party's overwhelming victory in the latest House of Representatives election. Defense Minister Kitazawa, on the other hand, has played up the stance of swiftly settling the issue, saying the government has no intention to waste time. The government's policy obviously lacks coherence.

In their explanations to Gates, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada cited local factors, such as a rise in the number of Diet members opposing the relocation within Okinawa. Their logic clearly reflects a lack of responsibility as political leaders in charge of national security.

After years of talks, the governments of Japan and the United States have decided to relocate Futenma Air Station within Okinawa and the Marine Corps to Guam - these go hand in hand. This is the conclusion drawn from the overall security policy of reducing the burden on Okinawa, which hosts the bulk of U.S. bases in Japan, and of retaining the U.S. military deterrent.

The realignment of U.S. forces in Japan is part of the U.S. strategy to realign U.S. forces worldwide. A setback in Japan could have an ill effect on the U.S. global strategy. In the Japan-U.S. defense summit, the two leaders agreed to work closely in dealing with the North Korean missile and nuclear issues, China's military buildup, and other matters. It must not be forgotten that a failure to implement the Japan-U.S. agreement would undermine regional security.

Secretary Gates repeatedly expressed appreciation for the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. The Hatoyama administration must sense high expectations for Japan to

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take pragmatic and effective action in the war against terrorism.

(7) Editorial: New administration must finalize Futenma relocation policy

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
October 22, 2009

Visiting Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stressed the U.S.'s basic policy was that relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to the Henoko district in the city of Nago in Okinawa is the sole plan; there is no other alternative.

The relocation of the Futenma base to the Henoko district was agreed by the previous governments of Japan and the United States. Because there was a change of government in both countries, it is only natural for the two new governments to verify the agreement and propose its review if necessary. The U.S. Obama administration concluded upon examination of the agreement that the existing relocation plan is the best option. What decision will the Hatoyama government make?

"Because we have our own view as the new government, we want to take time to produce a good result," Hatoyama said to reporters. The Prime Minister, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, and Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada each conveyed such a view to Gates.

Originally the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) called for the relocation of the Futenma base out of Okinawa or out of Japan. Although the U.S.'s position is that the current relocation plan is the best option, it is natural for Japan to ask Washington for time to examine the current plan and any fresh options.

However, Japan should not ask for more time just to put off a conclusion. Hatoyama has expressed his intention to gauge the result of the Nago mayoral election to be held in January next year. Although it is important to respect the will of the Okinawan people, the Hatoyama administration must not forget it is pressed to make a decision and reach a conclusion that can persuade the public.

We hope the new government will seriously look for every possible option and present the result to the public in a tangible manner. The new government should then finalize its policy and strive for its implementation. The United States wants to remove the risk posed by the Futenma base, which is located in a densely built-up residential area, but there is a limit to the U.S.'s patience. If the Hatoyama administration reviews the current agreement, it must come up with a plan acceptable to both the local community and Washington so that the plan can be implemented.

The Secretary of Defense's remarks disclosed the U.S.'s hard stance. He was quoted as saying that if the relocation of the Futenma base to the Henoko district is not realized, the air station will remain in Futenma and the entire USFJ realignment program, designed to lighten Okinawa's burden of U.S. military bases by, for example, relocating 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam, will grind to a halt.

Washington's concern is understandable, but the nation and Okinawans are hardly convinced by the current plan to construct a permanent U.S. base in Okinawa, where U.S. bases are concentrated, by reclaiming sea brimming with important species. The question is how

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Hatoyama perceives Okinawans' feelings and how he responds to the will of the Japanese people, which was expressed in the latest Lower House election, in the form of a change in government. That is what he must do.

The new government must prevent the divergence in bilateral views on the Futenma issue from undermining the entire alliance relationship. The identity of the two countries' interests and mutual trust are the pillars of the alliance. It would be unfortunate for Japan and the United States if the Futenma issue undermines bilateral relations.

We hope that Prime Minister Hatoyama will make President Obama's visit to Japan next month a starting point for searching for common ground for resolving the Futenma issue from the broader standpoint of the Japan-U.S. relationship. To that end, the Hatoyama administration must finalize its fundamental Futenma policy as early as possible.

ROOS